

Please not read this  
letter to strangers. I have  
written with too much  
abandon for the public eye.

48

New York Oct. 23<sup>d</sup> 1844

Now please do write before a great while. If I do not sign my name, you will know  
that this bubbling effusion comes from your affectionate friend, L. Maria Child

Dear Friend,

How soon you went silent again, after writing me that beautiful letter about Vieux Temps! And I wanted so to have you write me what you thought of Gle Bul! I will not be like the man who urged Stuart, the artist, to come and give his opinion of some old pictures he was exhibiting. "Some people say they are copies," said he; "but I swear I'll knock down the first person that intimates they are not by the old masters."

I will not thus ask your opinion of Gle Bul; but I shall be grieved if you do not deeply feel the beauty and the power of his music. It has awakened in me a new sense — it has so stirred the depths of my soul, and kindled my whole being, that my heart bounds forth to meet one that sympathizes with me. Old as I am, it is the strongest enthusiasm of my life. I could have thrown my arms round Susan Lyman's neck, when she told me that her experience had been like mine; that from him she dated the birth of a new sense. It may seem presumptuous in poor ignorant me, to say it; but against a million learned critics, I do

say I would venture to assert that nothing but genius, and transcendent genius, too, could take such possession of my soul.

There has been a French clique here, that have tried from the beginning to underrate him. Partly on account of Vieux Temps, and partly because he and his music are both too spontaneous and instinctive to please the French. They have done a great many mean things, and tried hard to set a fashion of criticising and depreciating him, as they did Shakespeare before him. What's the use of comparing him and Vieux Temps, or Shakespeare and Racine? The things are too different in character to be compared.

Concerning the alleged "false notes" of Ole Bull, I, of course, do not presume to judge. But I don't believe the assertion. Simply because I do not believe that an organisation so exquisitely attuned to music as his, could itself endure false notes. Certainly he has reasons for departures from established rules; wild and wayward they may be; but it surely is not want of ear, or want of knowledge. You know the critics complained much of Beethoven's aberrations. They alleged that he did certain things which distinguished masters of the science had forbidden. "Do they forbid it?" said Beethoven. "Well, then, I permit it."

Will you answer me? Will you  
a. One of the oldest musicians here, says; "I am a cool and candid observer. I have heard Vieux Temps, and admired his perfect skill and finish. I have heard all that the French and Italian critics here have to urge; I have heard Paganini again and again. But there is no mistake about it; no man has done such wonders on the violin as Ole Bull. No man living or that has lived, equalled him in tone and power. Paganini himself fell short of him in these attributes."

You would be charmed with the personal character of Ole Bull. He is just like a child. Diffluent of himself, and sensitive, oh so sensitive, that a rude breath hurts him. The extreme and beautiful simplicity of his character is not appreciated by the worldlings. To them it seems like weakness.

Then all nature breathes  
through his soul with  
such free joy! The other

day he was playing on the violin, and a bird in the room mocked him exactly. He cried, he laughed, he jumped. He was like a child to whom an absent mother had returned and spoken suddenly. He make false notes! If he does, so does nature herself.

John Grotter, my good adopted son, desires  
the most cordial remembrance to you,

Now my object in writing this is to ask you, if you admire his genius, as I hope you do, to write one of those eloquent articles of yours for the Democratic. Don't let any one know that I asked you, though; for should he hear of it, I think it would both give him pain, and offend him. He pursues a very dignified and manly course about such things. He leaves his reputation to take care of itself, without any such efforts on the part of himself or his friends.

Does he impress you enough to make you wish to write  
about him? If not, I need not charge you not to undertake  
it. If you wish to hear him frequently, with a view to under-  
stand and describe his characteristics, I can easily have  
matters arranged, so that it will be pecuniarily easy for you  
to do so. Tell me frankly, whether you would like to do it.  
And I pray you, answer this letter before the end of the week.

D

John S. Dwight

West Roxbury.

Mass<sup>ts</sup>

Post Paid  
G.S.C.

(3.)

L. Maria Child. Oct. 23. 1844.

M.S. F. 4.1 no. 48

Susan Lyman spent a week in N. York a short time ago,  
and I got more acquainted with her than I ever was before.  
She is a lovely and a gentle creature. We talked much of you.  
I have been studying a great deal about music for the last few  
months; and I have so wanted you near to answer questions.  
There are so many things that books cannot tell me.  
By the way, Ole Bul says that what I write and talk is to him like the  
study of counter-point. What does that mean? It must be florid counter-point  
I think.